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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: INTENSE FATAH-HAMAS CLASHES; AT LEAST 9 KILLED IN
GAZA AIRSTRIKE

REF: JERUSALEM 02381

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas groups continued in Gaza on June 12, spreading to the West Bank cities of Ramallah, Nablus and Salfit. Two people were killed in Gaza as a result of these clashes. There were no fatalities or major injuries in the West Bank incidents, but damage was reported to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and the Council of Ministers' buildings in Ramallah. Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas ordered a heightened security presence in Gaza to prevent further clashes, and issued instructions banning the public display of weapons in the Gaza Strip. Contrary to some press reports, he did not order a "state of emergency." Nine people were killed, including two children, in Gaza on June 13 as the result of an Israeli airstrike. END SUMMARY.

HAMAS-PSO CLASH IN GAZA

¶2. (C) A violent clash between the Ministry of Interior (MOI) Special Security Force (SSF) and elements of the Preventive Security Organization (PSO) erupted in Gaza during the June 12 funeral of a Hamas activist (reftel). A Hamas spokesman accused the PSO of opening fire on the mourners and, as a result, of killing one Hamas member. Shortly thereafter, Fatah sources reported that the SSF besieged the PSO headquarters in Rafah, attacking the HQ with hand grenades, rocket-propelled grenades, and other weapons. The siege lasted two hours, killing one Palestinian civilian (Sliman Zanon) and wounding 15 others. Three of the injured were Hamas members, two were children, and the remainder were PSO members.

CLASHES SPREAD TO RAMALLAH

¶3. (C) In the evening of June 12, elements from Force-17 and al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades took to the main intersections of Ramallah and began shooting into the air. The gunmen then attacked the Council of Ministers' offices, setting them on fire and causing damage to the building and equipment inside. Gunmen also attacked the PLC building, ransacking it and setting fire to the third floor. No injuries were reported in the incidents. Force-17 and PA police forces eventually halted the attacks.

¶4. (C) On June 12, al-Aqsa members also attacked Hamas PLC member from Hebron, Khalil al-Rabaai's office in Ramallah,

and physically assaulted him. Fatah-affiliated gunmen fired at the PLC building in Nablus, though there was no reported damage or injuries. Fatah-affiliated gunmen also attacked and set fire to PLC offices in Salfit.

ABBAS RAISES SECURITY LEVEL

15. (C) In the midst of this escalating violence, PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) issued instructions on June 12 for all security forces to deploy in Gaza. After the PSO-SSF clash in Rafah, sources in the president's office told ConGen POL FSN that approximately 800 National Security Forces, civil police, and presidential security, based on instructions from Abbas, were deployed in the Khan Yunis and Rafah areas of Gaza to prevent further clashes. Abbas has also banned the display of weapons in public, including those held by the SSF. Abu Mazen's Chief of Staff told Consul General on June 13 that the President did not declare a "state of emergency" as reported in some press accounts.

AIR STRIKE KILLS 9 IN GAZA CITY

16. (C) On June 13, nine people were killed in Gaza city as the result of an Israeli Air Force strike targeting a yellow Volkswagen van in which Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) activists were traveling. The PIJ gunmen were reportedly preparing to fire rockets at Israel. Media reports indicated that two of the dead were children, and that at least 20 bystanders were also wounded. Dr. Muwaiya Hassanin, the head of the Emergency Ward at the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza confirmed to ConGen POL FSN that two paramedics, one nurse,

and one doctor were killed, and that two children were among the dead. He said that he believed the Israelis fired two rockets, and that the deaths of the health care workers occurred when they were trying to rescue the victims of the first rocket. In a separate incident, Israeli media reported that two PIJ members were killed and two others wounded in Beit Lahiya in a suspected "work-accident."

PA CABINET MEMBER RESIGNS

17. (C) According to Fatah sources and senior officials in the PA Bethlehem governor's office, PA Minister of Tourism Joudeh Murqus resigned as a result of death threats against him and his family. These sources state that on the night of June 12-13, the Minister received phone calls warning him that he and his son would be executed if he did not resign. Shortly thereafter, dozens of Fatah gunmen fired shots at his home in Bethlehem. Murqus then resigned, announcing his decision to the media. On the morning of June 13, the Governor of Bethlehem, Salah Tamari, visited Murqus at home and encouraged him to withdraw his resignation. The Governor reportedly promised to protect Murqus and his family, and has ordered police to be stationed around the Minister's home and office.

DRIVE-BY SHOOTING IN WEST BANK

18. (C) Local media reported on June 13, that an Israeli security guard working in the West Bank between the Atarot and Qalandia checkpoints (near Jerusalem) was shot and lightly wounded in a drive-by shooting. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

WALLES